

NOTES FROM THE:

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Budget

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The Officer Individual Development Plan

My Aunt Martha used to say, *if you don't care where you're going, any road will get you there*. Whether you are an officer, enlisted, or civilian; this approach to career development is risky. In this article, however, the message is targeted at our officer corps. Furthermore, I highlight two challenges facing officer development and provide a framework for how we can improve.

First, we need to do a better job of developing officers who are competitive for promotion. Recent FM promotions to major and above have been dipping below average. Consequently, I believe a solid emphasis on professional development is a key to reversing the trend. More specifically, I think it is critical our officers pursue the full spectrum of FM assignments to include cost, budget, and financial service experiences. Without being overly dramatic, I want our officers to understand they are less competitive if they choose to stovepipe themselves in one discipline. Breadth is important! Diverse assignments not only make our officers more competitive; they also go a long way toward bridging our current experience disconnect.

With captains manned at 65% and lieutenants at 300% experience challenges certainly exist, but it's not all bad news. The numbers also reflect greater opportunity for the majority of our officers—lieutenants will hold more diverse jobs earlier, captains will lead with increased responsibility, and more senior officers will have greater influence over the ultimate direction of financial management. The bottomline is the future is bright—but many of our younger officers are not getting this message.

In the last issue of *The Air Force Comptroller*, Major JR Weilacher wrote an article comparing our need for retaining qualified officers to fixing a hole in the bottom of a rain barrel. The most staggering point in the article deals with the Air Force's recent cumulative continuation rate (CCR) for mission support officers. The CCR is a forecast of junior captains who will stay in long enough to meet the major's board. Currently only two out of five plan on staying. I'm not sure this statistic applies to the majority of our FM officers, nevertheless—it has my attention.

Fortunately, over the past year we have begun a serious dialogue about comptroller professional development. From our FM Executive Sessions, it has become clear we need more than just proactive thinking about professional development. We need a balancing across a variety of mission experiences if we are to adequately address our officers' competitiveness and experience base. Such balance can only come from a plan which weighs both the needs of the Air Force and the individual.

Consequently, we have created a Comptroller Officer Individual Development Plan (OIDP) flexible enough to fit most financial management officers' career expectations. The plan begins by addressing our need to:

- Grow AF officers with high technical competence in FM
- Maximize officer's contribution to the Air Force—given low experience levels
- Focus on technical training initially, then on leadership in later stages



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- Capitalize on being 300% manned in Lieutenants
- Bridge O&M and Acquisition disciplines

The plan also fuses the officer's long-range professional development with existing formal and local on-the-job training. By providing a deliberate approach to officer development, our officers move beyond the traditional practice of managing a career within the budget, finance, or cost stovepipes. Ultimately the OIDP seeks to guide our officers toward the right experiences at the right time in their careers.

So in the end, both the wisdom and warning of Aunt Martha's homespun expression becomes clear. Successful officer development requires a plan! It involves taking the diverse assignments beneficial to both the Air Force and to our officers' promotion potential. It involves communicating the excellent opportunities available to our younger officer, as well as those in the middle and at the top. By end of the summer, we plan to launch an OIDP web-based program our officers may use to chart their course. These resources will not only help them navigate the road ahead—but will also prevent them from being an Aunt Martha punchline.



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priate systems become web-enabled and provide access to data and information through the Air Force Portal. The main oversight body will be the reconstituted Executive Oversight Group (EOG) which will oversee the systems efforts of FMBMA-S (Gunter), the Air Force Financial Systems Management Office (AFFSMO) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and other MAJCOM systems initiatives.

Systems Management-Information Technology Initiatives Working Group (ITIWG). As part of the new CIO structure, there is a "spin-off" Information Technology Initiatives Working Group, which is comprised of functional, SC, and CIO representatives. The ITIWG is currently working issues associated with server consolidation, the Air Force Portal and its associated content, cost and performance benchmarking for IT, IT infrastructure and architecture, and other issues.

One particular topic at the forefront of the ITIWG is server consolidation. The Air Force Chief of Staff directed that all servers must be consolidated, with one test base per MAJCOM by 1 August 2001, and all of the Air Force by 1 September 2002.

The test bases are:

- ACC - Langley AFB
- AETC - Little Rock AFB
- AFMC - Rome NY
- ANG - Knoxville ANGB
- AFRC - Dobbins AFB
- AMC - Charleston AFB
- AFSOC - Hurlburt AFB
- AFSPC - Peterson AFB
- PACAF - Hickam AFB
- USAFE - Aviano AB

This consolidation can mean physical (move servers to another location), logical (servers remain in place and are monitored remotely), or a combination of these. There are, of course, many issues that must be worked to make this successful. Some of these issues include equipment, communication, and facility upgrades, equipment and software compatibility, training, manpower, and funding. SAF/FM is supporting this initiative and is asking that MAJCOMs and bases work with SC to help identify potential software, hardware, and data to consolidate. SAF/FM sent guidance (15 March 2001) on standards we will follow, but it basically boils down to two items—educate and negotiate. We must educate people on FM's unique duties and systems, internal controls, customer service, and resource availability, plus negotiate for specific Service Level Agreements (SLA) and for resource sharing and allocation. The ITIWG will continue to work the details and direction on how this initiative will progress.

